

MOORSIDE ALLOTMENTS ASSOCIATION

Committee meeting

**5.30pm on Tuesday 1 August 2023
Nunsmoor Centre, Fenham, NE4 5AH**

MINUTES

Present

Frank Lightfoot (Chair), Steven McDonnell, Barbara Taylor, Nick Coster, Sarah Farrell, Emily Sweetman, Susan Pownall, Tony Whittle, Karen Brown

1 Apologies for absence

Nicola Francis, Richard Littlewood, Simon Rutherford,.

2 Minutes of previous meeting (4 July) and matters arising

Susan noted that £18 (used for two bags of compost) should be deducted from the Plant Scheme total takings.

Frank reported that Plots 11 and 20b had not responded to his efforts to contact them. Also, there were no longer any holes by the hedge at Plot 95.

The poplar tree had been cleared away from Plot 34, the bees having departed the week before. It was agreed that, as the plot holder had been deprived of access to her plot during most of the growing season, she would not have to pay rent in 2024.

Action: Emily to record, advise Plot 34 and confirm with Nicola.

Minutes were proposed as a true record by Steven McDonnell, seconded by Sarah Farrell and AGREED.

3 Chair's update (Frank)

- Moorside and city competitions

The three judges for the City Competition had been escorted around the site by Frank on 12 July. Frank reported they were impressed with Moorside and spent 1.5 hours here, despite the rain.

- Meeting with Freeman / Lease

Frank attended a second meeting convened by the Freeman and the conversation continued about the lease (originally supplied Newcastle City Council). Concerns were reiterated about implications for the extent of associations' (or individual signatories') liability in the case of some clauses. The conversation is to continue with representatives from each Association in attendance.

- Improvements to water services on site

Since Frank first made contact there had been an initial visit from a representative of Northumbrian Water (NW). The representative was surprised by the age and location (not very accessible) of the water meter and at the inadequacy of some 15mm pipework. At the minimum NW indicated they may undertake to address these issues. NW agreed that Trevor Joblin would visit and inspect. Frank aimed to secure NW's assistance to improve manageability (i.e in the case of addressing leaks and turning water on / off), water pressure across the site, access to the meter, and bring power to the toilet blocks.

- Ash die back

Frank had mentioned to the Newcastle City Council (NCC) tree cutters when on site about a dead ash tree behind Plot 15. NCC advised they are only removing the upper canopy from trees with Ash die back, so as to retain a habitat for certain insects. A cherry-picker would be needed on site to complete this.

- Break-ins

Frank was aware of, and had reported, an additional couple of break-ins in the last fortnight.

4 Other updates

- Trading Hut (Susan)

Susan reported takings for July were £611.56.

- Inspections

Frank had previously proposed by email that formal inspections would not take place in August because July's persistent rain had prevented most people from gardening. Nick had done a quick check and noted that at Plot 75 an apple tree had been uprooted and that 27b had made a good start. Some pallets had been dumped at the front of the site. Steve had begun some strimming. Susan noted that the strimmer's repair and maintenance had cost £80.

- Lettings (Tony/Frank)

Tony was working on letting Plot 17. Emily returned Plot 17's key to Tony for refund of their £15 deposit.

- Health and Safety (Steven)

Steven reported that the bees had been gone since the previous Thursday and the protective net had been removed. Steven left the meeting at 6.15pm

5 Open Day 9 September (Emily)

Emily reported that she had invited plot holders who wanted to operate a stall on the day to make themselves known. She had approached Theresa Brolly, who kindly agreed to create a children's/visitors' trail around the site as she had done for the 2022 event. Various of the volunteers who had identified themselves during the members' survey had agreed to bake for the day. Others had identified themselves as willing to help with general maintenance.

Action: Emily to pass maintenance volunteer list to Richard.

Action: Susan to liaise with Andrew Moat about help with painting the store by the toilets.

Susan noted that the City Show had been promoted but appeared not to be adhering to the usual format and offered very short notice for those wishing to participate in the formal growing competition.

6 The Way Forward (Frank)

Frank had invited anyone with expertise or knowledge to produce some kind of information sheet / video for other plot holders. Possible sources were: Gail Young on healthy soil; David Rochester on bees; Angus Aitchison on water spiders; Susan Pownell on seasonal recipes.

Susan also agreed to produce an outline of the trading hut function.

Action: Susan

It was agreed to review noticeboard provision as the existing ones were in a poor state.

Action: Sarah to price up a possible bespoke version.

Action: Emily add to forward plan.

Frank and Tony planned to work on a new tenant induction booklet with initial 'dos and don'ts', and signposting to help and information.

Action: Frank and Tony

7 Any other business

Emily reported that she had submitted an expression of interest to a national government Health and Social Care fund for Automated External Defibrillators. It was not clear what the timetable was for the fund to be opened for bidding.

Emily proposed an alternative to traditional trophies/shields as prizes for the Moorside competition. Collecting, engraving and redistributing trophies / shields was time-consuming and expensive, and not everyone wished to display such items at home. As an alternative, she proposed engraved slates. These were cheaper, could be retained by the winner forever, and displayed on site (if the plot holder so wished). An added advantage was that

winning plots would be more visible to other plot holders who would become more aware of the standard that was required. A vote was held and this was AGREED.

Action: Emily to order slates for all prize winning categories.

8 Date of next meeting

5.30pm on Tuesday 5 September 2023